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Number 4



W.C.P.

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THE RED-FOOTED BOOBY ON NEST, LAYSAN ISLAND

Photographed from Nature by Walter K. Fisher

THE CONDOR A MAGAZINE OF WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY.



Volume VI

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A Dusky Grouse and Her Brood in New Mexico

BY FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

ONE of our pleasantest field experiences last summer was with an old Dendragapus in the Rocky mountains, which, after a short acquaintance flattered us by coming to accept us as neighbors. We had a hint of the pleasure in store for us as we were packing up the mountains, for when my horse, leading the way for the pack horses, flushed an old cock grouse which had been dusting himself at the foot of a tree close to the trail, he lit again on a branch so near that we could see his small pointed head and craned neck as he watched us. "If they're all as tame as that!"—I thought with a thrill of expectancy. When we had climbed to 11,000 feet we made camp in the blue spruces and established ourselves for our Canadian zone work.

Our neighbors were discovered one morning soon afterwards by Mr. Bailey who, bound for his mammal traps, started up the grassy slope on the edge of camp, a sunny slope dotted with mariposa lilies and bountifully supplied with patches of wild strawberry, which is a favorite mountain delicacy with the grouse. Half way up the hill two little grouse about a third grown, sprang from the long grass at his feet, one whizzing off in one direction and one in another. Quick as a flash the mother grouse appeared from behind a rock close by and 'sputtered and fussed', standing for some time within five feet of the enemy, effectually distracting his attention from her brood. Hoping that she would wait, he called me to bring the camera, but on my approach she started up the hill leading us to the woods, pointing the way with flags flying—head, crest, and tail up, an alert, conspicuous figure.

On reaching the woods I followed Mr. Bailey inside for a short distance to give the old bird time to compose herself, and on my return found her sitting quietly by a log on the edge of the woods. I wanted to get her into the light to photo-

tograph her and she let me drive her a few steps at a time until one of her brood hidden by the log flew up into a tree. Instantly the little hen which had been demurely permitting me to shoo her around, was transformed into the alert, anxious mother, and hurried back into the woods evidently expecting me to follow. Instead, I sat down on the grass and kept quiet.

After some time I was rewarded by the faintest possible call from behind me, and looking keenly in its direction discovered her creeping cautiously out of the dark woods, crest and head down, tail hanging. Not seeing me she came out to the edge of the meadow, mounted a log, and giving a low *cluck*, such as a motherly hen gives when quieting her brood, she emitted two loud characteristic, wild, whistling notes, on the instant leaning forward, craning her neck to listen. From the grass down the slope came a faint quavering answer from her little one—the one that had not been heard from since Mr. Bailey flushed it. At the answer the mother raised her head as if satisfied, and having placed it by her loud cry, called quietly at short intervals as if to draw it toward her.

While she was hunting up her second fledgling, the first one, the one that I



YOUNG BLUE GROUSE, PECOS MTS., N. M.

had frightened into a tree, flew obliquely down into the grass several rods from the woods. At this the old bird cautiously made her way out to it, creeping through the high grass between the sods as she had come from the woods, crest down, tail hanging, pecking at the grass at each side as she went. The small grouse, on the contrary, stood up as high as its weeks would permit, its dim-

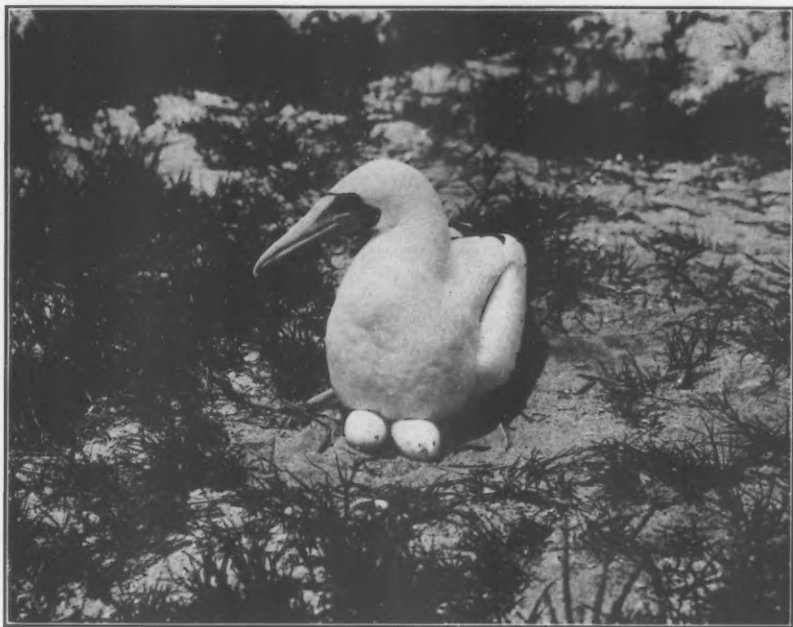
inutive crest raised, eagerly watching its mother's approach. As I appeared on the scene at that point, the old bird drew back a little, but the youngster, quietly making a detour behind my back joined her, and later when I succeeded in photographing the hen, at about seven feet, the chicken was almost in focus also.

Another day we came on the mother and one of her brood out on the open hillside, whereupon the old one promptly flew up into the nearest tree. The little grouse, badly frightened, crouched round-backed and flat-headed in the grass, its heart beats throbbing in its throat. After photographing it we got up within two or three feet of it, when it burst away on its stiff little wings, coming to ground again under its mother's tree. She clucked to it from her branch overhead and it squatted low, almost hidden in the protecting grass. We talked to it soothingly for some time and then drove it gently out into a better light, when quite reassured, before we had time to get a picture, it walked away, its little crest and tail raised in a very cocky manner.

A cold stormy night a week later the old grouse brought her brood into the firs behind our camp, and in the night, when a deer whistled she was so startled

she almost flew into our tent. The next morning her strawberry patch was white with hailstones and we found her sitting humped over a stone, while her two bedraggled young were trying to keep warm under cover of the firs. By this time our little neighbors were so tame that they did not startle when Mr. Bailey shot a hummingbird, and as he said, the only danger was that if we had stayed much longer they would get so tame that some one would shoot them when we left. As we broke camp to go on up the mountains soon afterwards, however, I trust that no harm came through us to the little family that had given us so much pleasure while camped in their woods.

Washington, D. C.



1. BLUE-FACED BOOBY AND NEST

J. O. S.

Three Boobies Interviewed

BY WALTER K. FISHER

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR AND JOHN O. SNYDER

WE found boobies, at rest, scarcely more difficult to photograph than stuffed birds, provided we exercised elementary caution in approaching them. They made ideal subjects, consequently, for a piping hot day on a tropical islet, since we early discovered that under such conditions one is likely to be

less patient than in a cool forest of a northern zone. We were fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of three species of *Sula* among the islets to the westward of the main Hawaiian Group; namely, *Sula cyanops*, *Sula piscator*, and *Sula sula*. All the accompanying photographs (which are accredited by our respective initials)



2. A BLUE-FACED BOOBY FAMILY

J. O. S.

sedgy slope facing the ocean, exposed to spray-laden winds and close to the booming surf. On the inner slopes of the island, facing the lagoon, the species is entirely absent, being replaced by its somewhat smaller congener, *S. piscator*. The homes of the masked gannets are not crowded, colony-fashion, but

are scattered here and there over the greensward, and one can see them from afar, because there is usually a circular patch of bare sand about each nest—provided the latter is among grass—in the center of which stands the omnipresent sentinel bird. There is really no nest at all, the two eggs being deposited on

were secured, however, on Laysan Island, a small atoll about eight hundred miles northwest-by-west from Honolulu. A general description of this wonderful bird metropolis was published under the account of the man-o'-war bird, in the last issue of this magazine (p. 57).

In their actions boobies are less interesting than most tropical sea birds, being at best rather stolid creatures, much given to gazing at their own long faces. They are the phlegmatic, unsentimental, burgomasters of the community, as different in all their actions from the nervous terns or playful albatrosses, as persons of a similar temperament would be. On Laysan, the masked or blue-faced booby (*S. cyanops*) lives only on the



W. K. F.

3. *SULA CYANOPS* FEEDING YOUNG

the sand, with a few dried grasses scratched around them, as if the old bird in her own mind satisfied her sense of possession by thus staking a claim. Very often even the formality of a few grasses is omitted. The eggs are outwardly limy white, the under shell of light blue being often revealed by scratches made while the outer layer was soft. It is apparently characteristic of this species to lay two eggs, and raise but one young. The right of the oldest child of the house of *Cyanops* seems all fixed by law, but in the enforcement of this canon, Nature proves once more that she is not always a kind mother. In other words, it is distinctly rough on the bird which is hatched last. There is evidently a period of several days between the laying of the first and second egg. The chick first hatched is considerably grown before the second appears, and from the peculiar manner of feeding, is able to devour all available food. It is probably true, also, that the old bird is not at all concerned for its second chick, for we found two newly hatched young, one of which had already been trampled to death, as if purposely.



4. BLUE-FACED BOOBY FEEDING YOUNG

W. K. F.

We found young and eggs in about equal numbers, and most of the eggs were far advanced in incubation. The young varied from about a week old down to newly hatched individuals. Often all signs of the second egg were removed, as if the nestling had hatched, and had been devoured by a parent, or some marauding *Fregata*. But more frequently there would be one nestling and one egg. Sometimes this egg was spoiled, sometimes contained an embryo. The habit of disposing of one of its offspring is not confined to the birds inhabiting the Hawaiian Group, but has been noted also on Clipperton and the Galapagos Islands by Mr. R. H. Beck, who tells me he has observed the old bird strike one of the nestlings, as if attempting to make away with it.

The first afternoon at Laysan we spent on the outer slopes of the islet among the boobies. While stalking some bristle-thighed curlews (*Numenius tahitiensis*) which were ridiculously tame and kept flying a little way ahead, uttering flutelike

notes as they foraged among the wiry salt-grass, we espied an old booby feeding its young, in a highly gruesome manner. The process was promptly photographed at close range, and as sometimes happens, the better of the two exposures (Fig. 4)



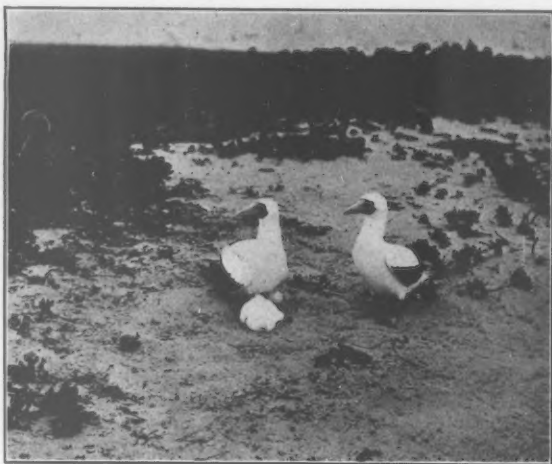
5. BLUE-FACED BOOBY AND YOUNG

W. K. F.

was badly light-struck, the beam almost obscuring the body of the bird. An enlargement was made from this negative, the body touched up, and the result re-photographed. The head, neck, and young bird were not light struck. These two pictures show better than any description the exact manner of feeding. The head of the young is thrust fairly into

the throat of the parent, who disgorges the fish contained in its very spacious stomach. In the few stomachs we examined the flying fish, their favorite food, had been swallowed whole. Whether the mother waits till this is partially digested, or allows the bird to nibble at the end I am unable to say. The latter view seems a bit absurd, but the young kept its head in the throat an inordinately long time, and for several courses in succession. Note the rigidity of the neck muscles, and, in fact, of the whole pose of the old bird. We were on Laysan a week, but did not again witness the feeding.

The young bird nearly always keeps its head under the parent, as shown in figures 5 and 6, altho the greater part of its body may be exposed to the sun. Both birds take turns in brooding the eggs or watching the nestling. Occasionally both will be seen standing guard together, in an absurd statuesque pose, or gazing sea-



6. BLUE-FACED BOOBIES, YOUNG, AND EGG

W. K. F.

ward or at the sky, as if on the lookout for winged marauders. Frequently they utter a hoarse, strident cry. When the old birds exchange places, which is happening in figures 2 and 6, one slips off the nestling and the other immediately takes its place. The young birds when bereft of protection for a moment, assume very outlandish postures, as shown in Fig. 2. The bird to the right is strutting off with the characteristic ambling swagger. He bit the finger off the photographer's glove a moment later—amiable fellow! In this photograph the tolipalmate feet show admirably. Note also the absence of nostrils.

The red-footed booby, *Sula piscator*, unlike the foregoing species, always builds in bushes, so far as my experience goes, never on the ground. At Laysan it is found in colonies of scattered individuals on the inner slopes of the island. The nest is very simple, scarcely more than a slightly hollowed platform composed



7. RED-FOOTED BOOBY, *SULA PISCATOR*, ON NEST

W. K. F.

of twigs and sticks, placed on the top of bushes, which cover large areas on the island. The birds place a few fresh leaves about the newly laid eggs. The old birds take turns in brooding, and occasionally one is seen perched on the side of the nest while the other is sitting. Whenever we approached a nest to take a photograph, the occupant would ruffle its feathers as shown in the frontispiece, and if we came too near would take a chance poke at us with its beak, which much resembles an animated marlin spike. The old birds are very handsome, despite their vicious yellow eyes, as the white plumage is set off by bright blue skin about the bill, and by coral-red feet.

Most of the nests contained a single white egg, and we saw only a few downy white young, recently hatched.

We did not observe this species feeding its young, but one old bird, which was

gently poked with a tripod, gladly disgorged squids for our inspection. The red-footed booby also feeds on fish.

The common booby, *Sula sula*, for some reason best known to itself, does not live on Laysan, but we encountered it on Necker, a high, rocky islet, a few hundred miles to the eastward, where also the two foregoing species were met with. In its habits the common booby much resembles *Sula cyanops*, depositing two eggs on a shelf of rock, and rearing only one young. On account of lack of time and proper apparatus we were unable to secure satisfactory photographs.

Stanford University, California.

California Jays and Cats

BY JOSEPH MAILLIARD

WE always have several cats around our home at San Geronimo for the purpose of keeping the house free from rats and mice, which they do most effectively. These cats are daily fed in the back yard and some California jays have discovered that they can get good free lunches there also. Throughout most of the year several are in the habit of coming around at frequent intervals through the day to feed on what remnants may be left.

At nesting time they usually scatter among the brushy hillsides and are not often in evidence, but this season apparently one pair has remained at the house, and these two birds have become highly educated. Not being content with remnants alone they dodge around among the cats for better picking, and even resort to strategy to obtain particular bits of food that the animals are intent upon. However, the cats themselves have also grown wise in their own generation and it is seldom that a jay can make a cat leave its own particular tid-bit. Each has the measure of the other, and while a cat is watching, it is rarely that a jay approaches within reach of its business end, though it will do all it can to make the cat jump at it, or at least turn away. Grimalkin has learned to keep her tail well curled up when feeding, as a favorite trick of the jay is to give a vigorous peck at any extended tail and, when the cat turns to retaliate, to jump for the prize and make off with shrieks of exultation. These birds are not afraid of any of us within reasonable distance, though keeping a weather eye open for too close an approach. None of these actions are remarkable when one considers that it is the result of a course of education that has been going for some time that has produced them, but what does seem peculiar is that this particular pair of jays delight in wantonly teasing the cats in a most persistent manner. To find a cat napping, with its tail partially extended is absolute joy to one of these birds, which will approach cautiously from the rear, cock its head on one side and eye that tail until it can no longer resist the temptation, and, finally after hopping about a few times most carefully and noiselessly, Mr. (or Mrs.) Jay will give the poor tail a vicious peck and then fly, screeching with joy, to the nearest bush.

Watching one of these demonstrations one evening made me think of writing these notes. A large black cat was asleep on the edge of the roadway back of the house and as I was sitting on the porch about twenty yards away, one of the jays hopped down from a bush and approached the animal, whose tail was drawn in

most carefully close to its body. The bird hopped about from one side to the other, getting within eight or ten inches of the cat at times, but either seemed afraid to peck at quite such close range or else hoped to disturb the animal enough to cause it to switch its tail back a little. After trying these tactics for a while the jay flew back to the bush, but four times in perhaps ten minutes it hopped down again and went through the same performance. Finally it hopped to about six inches from the after end of the cat and screeched with all its might. One would naturally suspect that the cat would turn on the bird, but not a bit of it. He simply cocked up his ears a bit, gave a careless glance rearward, snuggled up his tail closer yet and went to sleep again. A fifth time the jay renewed the attack, but just at this moment another cat came strolling by and the proposed victim arose and joined it, leaving me to speculate as to how long the bird would have amused himself in this somewhat unusual manner. There was no food nearby and nothing to attract the bird except a strong desire to have some sport at the cat's expense.

One of the queerest pranks of these jays, reported to me by a member of the household, was one I would have given something to have seen. It happens that our cats have the kitten habit to what seems an excessive degree, and, as their numbers must be limited, each batch of kittens is searched for assiduously as soon as their presence is suspected. Not long ago a certain tabby kept disappearing at short intervals for a couple of days and there was every reason to suspect that she had had a relapse of the above little failing. Diligent search failed to reveal the whereabouts of any "nestlings," but one day a faint mewing outside the window attracted the attention of some one in the kitchen when lo and behold there was a jay hauling a very young kitten out from under a young artichoke plant in the garden. The jay lugged the poor kitten along for a little way, seeming to enjoy its feeble wails, and then stopped and screeched in exultation over the find, only to repeat the process again and again. Needless to say the old cat was not present at the moment or things would have been made more lively. The bird certainly did not want to eat the kitten, and the affair seems to have been nothing else than a matter of pure mischief. Since this episode a jay chased a cat clear across the back yard—some fifty or sixty feet—by merely screeching at it and pretending to peck at its tail, the cat never stopping to show fight in any way. Lately nothing exciting seems to have transpired in this happy community and I think Mr. and Mrs. Jay are busy with household cares of their own at present, though I have not been able to locate their domicile.

San Geronimo, Marin Co., California.

The Leconte Thrasher

BY M. FRENCH GILMAN

MY introduction to this interesting bird, *Toxostoma lecontei*, was during the summer of 1882 when his whistling note nearly confirmed my boyish belief in ghosts. In a mesquite and creosote bush thicket at Whitewater ranch was buried a Mexican horsethief who had died with his boots on. Near this thicket I frequently wandered though it was said to be haunted. On several oc-

casions a whistle would send me to the ranch house to see what was wanted, only to find no one had whistled. This puzzled me until I found the noise came from the thicket and of course must be the Mexican ghost. This I believed until a few days later accident revealed to me the real whistler, a Leconte thrasher. The note of the thrasher can be mistaken for that of no other bird. It resembles closely the whistle a man employs on calling a dog, short, with rising inflection at the end. So striking is the resemblance that it is nearly impossible to distinguish one from the other. The calls are uttered at intervals of about a minute, when the bird is in the mood, and are easily imitated. If done accurately the bird will continue answering your call for a long time but care must be taken not to repeat the whistle too rapidly or he sees through the deception. In addition to the call note he has a very attractive song which much resembles that of an uneducated mock-bird, though fuller and richer and pitched in a higher key.

The only drawback to the song is its infrequency even where the birds are most abundant. You may be in their midst all day and see several pairs, but if one song rewards you it may be counted a red-letter day. At least this has been my experience during an intimacy with them of nine years in particular. For some time I doubted the statement made by some writers that this thrasher was a fine singer, but was finally "shown" by the bird himself.

While standing one evening on a high-drifted hill of white sand about two miles west of the rim of ancient Salton sea I heard the sweet strains of a new bird song and began to look for the singer. I expected to find a mocking bird whose individuality had been developed by the desert solitudes and who had learned a new song. On an adjoining sand hill, perched on the exposed tip of a sand-buried mesquite I saw the singer—a Leconte thrasher. Perhaps environment enhanced the music for the spot was a most lonesome, God-forsaken one, near an ancient Indian encampment and burial ground, but I have heard no sweeter bird song and the memory still lingers. Since then I have heard the song a few times but not oftener than once or twice a year, though I have been frequently among the birds. Not only do they seldom sing but the whistling call note is not often heard. They appear to be silent, unsociable creatures, never more than a pair being found together, unless a brood of young birds and parents, and then only until the former can shift for themselves.

In no place between Banning and Salton can this thrasher be termed abundant or even fairly common, though in two localities I have seen as many as six pairs in a day and at one place found six nests in one day. It is a bird of the cactus region and is not often found away from it. The wide desert washes, sparsely populated by cholla cactus seem ideal homes for these birds and there they may be found more often than in greener surroundings.

Banning is the western limit of their range and they seem resident wherever found. They are nearly as much ground birds as roadrunners and will not often take to flight unless pressed, then only for a short distance and the running is resumed. A few years ago cowboys in Banning amused themselves by capturing them on horseback. They would run the bird till it took wing, then after it again till its wings failed altogether, and becoming tired of running it would take refuge in a bush or hole and be captured.

The Leconte thrasher may readily be distinguished from the California or the crissal thrasher by its lighter, sandy color, and blackish tip to the tail. The geographical range of the Leconte and crissal thrasher is very similar but the California thrasher does not often intrude upon them or they upon him. In Banning,

however, Leconte and California thrashers overlap while at Palm Springs the three species may be found.

For a nesting site the Leconte usually selects the interior of a thick cholla cactus though I have seen the nests in mesquites and thorn trees. But if cactus be available the nest is placed in nothing else. It is constructed of coarse twigs rather loosely put together and the lining is nearly always made of a woolly desert plant that can be felted or packed closely together. How the builders get the large twigs into the middle of the bushy mass of spines is a puzzle. I have seen nests where to insert the hand it was necessary to cut away several branches of the cactus. The nests are from two to five feet from the ground—average about two and a half feet. They are easily located but not so easily seen. This sounds contradictory, but not so. In riding along the desert, when you see a cholla cactus that appears thicker or denser than usual, go examine it for a Leconte's nest. Perhaps you ride within six feet without seeing any nest, when a gray or drab bird slips quietly from the opposite side and melts away into the sand-gray vegetation. A nearer approach shows a foreign mass in the center of the cactus and on peering into it from directly above three or four eggs may be seen resting on the gray felted lining of the nest. Occasionally the nest is in a more exposed position and may be distinguished at several rods distance. But in looking for nests be sure to investigate all the dense bushy cholla cactuses you see.

The bird is a close sitter and will rarely leave the nest before the intruder approaches within ten feet of the home. Often the hand may come about twenty inches from her before she leaves. She makes no fuss or outcry but silently takes to the brush and is seen no more.

Nest building begins very early in the season. February 17, 1899, is my earliest record, three eggs in set; and the latest June 4, 1902, two fresh eggs—probably incomplete set. Of the twenty-eight sets I have recorded—to set the Audubonian mind at rest I will state that *recorded* does not mean *taken* in this case—four were in February, as follows: Feb. 17, 1899, Feb. 19, 1899, Feb. 24, 1901, and Feb. 26, 1895. In March I have only two records and in April sixteen, but six of these were of young birds and nearly all the rest date near the first of the month. In May I find five records and in June one. Perhaps more than one brood is raised in a season but I doubt it.

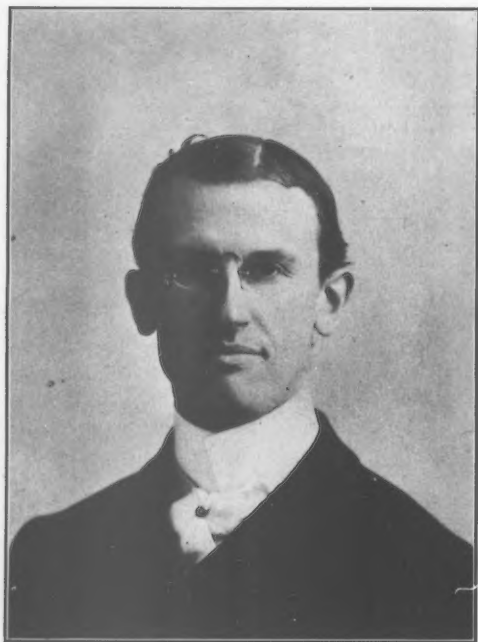
The eggs are light green in color, finely speckled with shades of brown, usually on the large end but often scattered all over the egg. Sometimes the specks are larger, approaching spots or even blotches. The usual set contains three eggs but four are not uncommon and two are sometimes found. Of the records made I find six sets of four eggs, twelve of three, and four of two—complete sets as advanced incubation showed. Other sets were obviously incomplete and sometimes the task of getting into the nest to count the young was too much for even scientific ardor. Of the twenty-eight nests all but four were in the cholla cactus, the others being as follows: one in a mesquite, one in an unidentified desert shrub and two in thorn trees, about as bad as the cholla.

In size the eggs average 1.09 by .75 inches. Some of the extremes measure 1.17 by .77, 1.14 by .74, 1.12 by .78 and 1.00 by .73.

Climatic variations in the seasons appear to have an effect on the numbers of the birds. In seasons of more than normal rainfall they seem more numerous and nest more than in dry seasons. The spring of 1895 was a very favorable one, the desert enjoying heavy spring rains, and consequently an abnormal growth of vegetation, making of the desert wastes a perfect flower garden. The sand hills were covered with desert primroses, acres of country were tinged pink with the sand

verbenas or abronias and other acres were flaming with the yellow annual encelias. Insect life fairly swarmed and birds, especially Leconte thrashers and mocking-birds, were more numerous than before or since. I found eight Leconte's nests on one trip near Palm Springs and saw many of the birds. The next three years were dry on the desert and I saw only six nests, though frequently in their territory.

Banning, California.



MR. HARRY C. OBERHOLSER

Mr. Oberholser is well known to the readers of this magazine, as the author of a valuable series of critical papers on ornithological subjects. His work may be said to have begun with "A Description of Two New Subspecies of the Downy Woodpecker" which appeared in 1895, followed in 1896 by "A Preliminary List of the Birds of Wayne Co., Ohio. Perhaps his best-known revisions are: "A Review of the Wrens of the Genus *Thryomanes*" (1899) and "A Review of the Larks of the Genus *Otocoris*" (1902). Mr. Oberholser is responsible for a long list of papers, which, for the most part, have appeared in *The Auk*, and in the Proceedings of the U. S. National Museum.

About the Utah Gull

BY REV. S. H. GOODWIN

THE return of the gulls brings to mind a curious situation in relation to the specific name of the sacred bird of the Latter Day Saints. If we may judge from the variety of names applied to these birds, which come in such numbers—in the spring—into the valleys of central Utah, more or less of uncertainty exists as to the species.

In an article by H. L. Graham, in *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 52, these birds are called the American herring gulls (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*), a subspecies, by the way, which was eliminated from the Check-List by the Eleventh Supplement. Olive Thorne Miller in "A Bird-Lover in the West," writes interestingly of some of the habits of the Utah gull, which she calls the "Herring Gull" (*L. a. smithsonianus*?).

It is not surprising that those who write bird articles and books of a popular character should sometimes be less than exact when applying the accepted nomenclature to "our little brothers of the air": the object in view may not seem to require accuracy in this respect. The matters which receive the attention of such writers are the habits and haunts and individuality and life of the birds. But that a recognized authority on the subject should, apparently, slip in this matter does afford occasion for surprise.

In that excellent and most serviceable work, "A Handbook of Birds of the Western United States," Vernon Bailey has the following in connection with the Franklin gull (*Larus franklini*): "* * * In Utah their services are so well appreciated that Brigham Young used to offer up prayers that they be sent to destroy the grasshoppers that infested the land. One often sees flocks of fifty to five hundred catching grasshoppers on the wing, wheeling, diving, and rising, till at a distance the white flock suggests a wild flurry of snowflakes." This reference to the local history, and to the habits of the Utah gulls, is correct, but the name is not. The writer, of course, does not know what gulls earned the lasting gratitude of the Mormon people in the pioneer days of '48—the story of which was told by President Smith in the "Deseret Evening News" of February 14, 1903—but, if they were the Franklin, then that species has been replaced by another, for the gulls which now find their way into these valleys by the thousands, are the California gulls (*Larus californicus*).

I have seen thousands upon thousands of these gulls during my six years' residence in the state; I have photographed them repeatedly; I have watched them for hours as they circled about the newly plowed field, or followed close behind the plowman, as blackbirds do in some localities, or sunned themselves on the ridges of the furrows after a hearty meal of worms; I have studied them as they fared up and down the river in search of dead fish and other garbage, or assembled in countless numbers in some retired, quiet slough where they rent the air with their harsh, discordant cries and demoniac laughter, or sailed on graceful wing in rising circles till lost in the deep blue of heaven, and I have yet to see a Franklin gull. As I write, the skin of a beautiful specimen lies before me. The bird was shot out of a flock of fifty or more just like it, and there were hundreds of others of the same species about me at the time—California gulls, every one.

And, not only has no Franklin gull come within range of my observation, but, so far as my knowledge extends, the species has not been taken in Utah. Mr. H. C. Johnson, of American Fork, this state, who has had several interesting arti-

cles in THE CONDOR, and who for a decade or more was engaged in making extensive collections of the eggs of Utah birds, tells me that he has not seen a Franklin gull in Utah. Another well informed student of the bird life of this state, Prof. Marcus E. Jones, is quoted by Davie, "Nests and Eggs of North American Birds," on the nesting habits of the California gull, but no reference to him appears in connection with the Franklin gull. Ridgway in "Notes on the Bird Fauna of the Salt Lake Valley," and in "Ornithology of the Fortieth Parallel;" Merriam, "Sixth Annual Report, U. S. Geol. Survey"; Henshaw—quoting Ridgway—in "Annotated List of Utah Birds;" and Cooke in, "Birds of Colorado," all name the Utah gull *Larus californicus*.

It would be of interest to know what data led Prof. Bailey to call this bird, *Larus franklini*.

Provo City, Utah.

The Birds of the John Day Region, Oregon

BY LOVE HOLMES MILLER

THE observations^a here recorded were made during May and June of 1899 and with the collections now in the Biology Department of the University, comprise the work done on the ornithology of the John Day region by the first University of California expedition into that part of the country.

A good general account of the expedition was given before the Science Association of the University by the geologist in charge, Dr. John C. Merriam^b

What need be added to this account will be those points regarding the topography that will bear directly upon the bird life. The locality known as the Cove is that part of the John Day basin about fifteen miles northwest of Dayville, and is some one hundred miles due southeast of The Dalles. Bridge Creek is a tributary entering the John Day, about sixty-five miles from its junction with the Columbia.

The expedition was in the field from May 25 to July 10. A distance of some three hundred miles was covered in the round trip and a range of elevation from the low, hot country on the Columbia to the pine belt in the Blue Mts. Three permanent camps were made: first at the Bridge Creek beds, June 1 to 12; second, at the Cove, Blue Basin, June 19 to 28; third, at Lower Basin in the Cove, June 29 to July 2. Thus there were twenty-five days in which collecting could be done. Half of this time was devoted to biology, making not more than thirteen days for making collections. The collection numbers fifty-four birds and ten mammals with a few reptiles and batrachians.

In his general discussion Dr. Merriam speaks of the desert character of the country and the extreme paucity of living species. The region is indeed most disappointing to the collector in search of existing forms, or to one on mere pleasure bent, yet I think there is not one in the party but considers this chapter in his experience one of the most enjoyable and profitable.

The Bridge Creek Camp was made at Allen's ranch, ten miles up Bear Creek from its junction with the John Day and twelve miles from Mitchell. The valley

^a Published by permission of Professor W. E. Ritter, head of Department of Biology.

^b "An expedition to the John Day Region, Oregon," J. C. Merriam, Proc. Sci. Assoc. Univ. of Calif., Vol. 1, No. 1.

at this point is about one and one-half miles wide, Bridge Creek joining Bear Creek here. The creek runs between perpendicular banks of soft dirt twelve or more feet high in places. For some one hundred yards along the stream extends a narrow copse of scrubby willows entangled with vines. The remainder of the valley floor is covered with the natural growth of sage, three to five feet high. Allen's ranch gives some diversity to the collector by furnishing a half dozen fruit trees, a few poplars, an irrigating ditch with its few yards of willows and sedge, and a twenty acre field of alfalfa hay.

Up the tributary ravines to the east, toward the fossil beds, a few scrubby junipers occur in the valley floor. Above the fossil cliff rise lava terraces to a height of several thousand feet, eight terraces being distinctly visible. On the more gentle slopes between terraces a sparse growth of junipers and some bunch grass is to be found. The entire region, however, that has not been fenced in, is over run and devastated by sheep. A pocket mouse would starve in such a place; lizards are extremely rare, and snakes almost entirely wanting.

At the camp in Turtle Cove, the conditions were much the same. The altitude was slightly greater, there were no willows, but where we camped a small copse of birch and wild gooseberries shaded a small spring which kept the ground moist for a few yards down the ravine. Some distance to the north was a second ravine carrying a small stream bordered by willows for a short distance and a few scrub pines. A mile or more down the ravine and below the cliffs runs the John Day through the treeless sage of the canyon floor.

At the third camp, Lower Basin, the conditions were somewhat improved. The river makes a great bend, broadening its bed and giving room for a number of giant cottonwoods, willow copses, a small marsh and hay fields. From the south wall descends a steep ravine, well wooded with birch and leading up to the pine timber in limited patches in steep notches in the lava wall. The limited extent of the pine growth probably explains the absence of *Eutamias* for which I searched in vain. Here for the first time on the trip, one could really feel that he was not in the desert. Dearly as one may love the open sage stretches of the desert of the west, a bit of pine timber with fir and aspen making a cool twilight in the hollows is a refreshing change at the close of a six weeks trip. Unfortunately we could spend but four days at Lower Basin.

— *Dendragapus obscurus*. Dusky Grouse. A fine cock was taken at the Cove, June 24. Some half dozen were flushed from the junipers and grassy hillsides within several hundred yards, evidently one flock. The food was of green herbs, crop being stuffed with the young leaves and flower buds of a small composite growing on the hill. Mr. Davis later observed the courting dance of the species. A single male strutted with spread tail before a group of four or five females and at intervals of a minute or two emitted a single note much like the *whoo!* of the horned owl but much lower in pitch. I heard this note quite frequently in the region thereabout but took no more specimens. A nest of this bird, containing the shells of the season's eggs, was found at the Cove, June 25. It was merely a shallow excavation under a low sage bush with slight dry grass about. The shells were too scattered to allow an estimate of the number of eggs. Were there two breedings in the season or do the courting dances continue after the first brood is hatched?

Pediocetes p. columbianus. Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse. A single specimen was seen flying overhead to the sage mesa at Caleb, June 13. The bird was identified by Mr. D., an old hunter in this region. A tuft of the feathers was

picked up in a dust wallow at Cottonwood. The general color was decidedly rusty.

Centrocercus urophasianus. Sage Hen. A single specimen was seen by Dr. Merriam at the Cove and wounded with a revolver but it escaped. All the hunters of the region speak of it as common among the sage.

Zenaidura macroura. Mourning Dove. This form was met with all the way and often served to elaborate the camp menu. It was seen nesting in June in the fossil cliffs at the Cove.

Cathartes aura. Turkey Vulture. Noted from the steamer on the Columbia and in the country just outside The Dalles, May 24.

Falco s. phalaena. Desert Sparrow Hawk. Observed at Bridge Creek, June 6.

Pandion h. carolinensis. Osprey. One of these birds was seen at Sherar's Bridge on the Deschutes River, May 27, but it proved too wary to allow me within gunshot. I have noted this species in southern California on the Santa Ana River some sixty miles from the nearest large body of water, the so-called river being but a few inches deep.

Bubo v. pacificus. Western Horned Owl. This big fellow found shelter in the caverns among the fossil beds, the darkness and seclusion of the deserted place being the delight of such as he. Abundant castings, containing the bones of rodents, were found.

Megascops a. macfarlanei ? The familiar note of a screech owl was heard on the river at Cottonwood, June 17, at the cottonwood timber.

Speotyto c. hypogæa. Burrowing Owl. Observed at Eight Mile Creek, May 25.

Dryobates v. hyloscopus ? A single specimen observed at Lower Basin, June 27.

Asyndesmus torquatus. Lewis Woodpecker. Seen from the train just out of Portland, May 20. Observed on dry sage hillside on Cherry Creek, May 31. Quite abundant on fence posts along Bridge Creek and in scrubby junipers at the base of the hill; evidently breeding in the junipers at the Cove, June 22. This bird was extremely shy at all times. One morning I spent an hour or more at sunrise in trying to stalk them in a small group of junipers at Bridge Creek but they acted as sentinels for each other and could not be approached. I do not understand this extreme shyness as they seem to have no especial enemy aside from the collector and such was surely new to these birds. By stationing H. at one end of the juniper grove and making a drive of the birds one was finally taken. At Antoine on Rock Creek, at a much greater elevation, it was observed making excursions into the air evidently in pursuit of insects; a few circles and then down again to its perch on a dead pine.

Colaptes c. collaris. Red-shafted Flicker. Observed preparing a nest in the side of the fossil cliff at the Cove, June 23. Numerous smaller or larger holes occur in the furrowed deposit often leading into larger caverns within. From one of these I flushed a flicker that acted in a very conscious manner, suggesting a nest at once. I could not climb to the place to make sure of the bird's intentions nor note its work. On the following day, however, I found another hole likewise inaccessible, from which after the stimulus of a few well directed stones, there proceeded the hissing squeak of young flickers, thus proving the flicker to have adapted itself to the treeless condition of the region. The species was quite abundant along the river at Lower Basin.

Ceryle alcyon. Kingfisher. Observed at Eight Mile Creek, May 17, and at Rock Creek, June 14.

Phalænoptilus nuttalli. Poor-will. Several of these birds were heard whistling at dusk about the low hills at Bridge Creek beds, June 6, but none could be taken.

Chordeiles v. henryi. Western Night Hawk. A morning's delay at Mitchell, June 11, gave a very good opportunity to observe a number of these birds as they flew high above the canyon, evidently spending the whole morning at play. They sometimes flew at such a height as to be scarcely visible, all the time uttering their jarring note; suddenly one would drop directly downward a distance of one hundred feet or more, bringing up with a graceful turn and a loud whirring boom. A specimen was taken at the Cove on June 25, where it acted as if nesting.

+ *Stellula calliope*. Calliope Hummer. Quite a number of these small hummers were noted in the side canyon above Lower Basin, June 30. Several taken.

Tyrannus tyrannus. Kingbird. First seen at Cottonwood June 17. A few noted at Lower Basin along the river but none could be taken.

Tyrannus verticalis. Western Kingbird. Seen about town at The Dalles, May 22. At the Cove this bird sometimes wakened us at 3 A. M. by its chatter overhead. Noted in pine timber at Spanish Gulch, June 16.

+ *Myiarchus cinerascens*. Ash-throated Flycatcher. Observed on the Cherry Creek road May 27; at the Cove on June 27.

Sayornis saya. A nest of young in full plumage was found in a house at Nansene, May 26.

Contopus richardsoni. Western Wood Pewee. Observed over sage plain at Bridge Creek beds on June 3.

Empidonax traillii. Traill Flycatcher. Observed in the willows at Caleb, June 13, though the cherry trees were still in blossom and the willows bare. The note was identical with that of the same form in California.

Pica hudsonia. Magpie. First noted on Eight Mile Creek, May 22, where it was abundant and very shy; peculiar windmill flight and harsh cry. Noted in junipers above the Bridge Creek beds June 5. Numerous at the Cove where a well-fledged youngster was taken June 21.

— *Cyanocitta s. annectens*. Several specimens observed among the pines above Lower Basin. No. 53 of the collection was taken here on June 29.

Corvus americanus. Common Crow. Crows were noted along the Columbia at The Dalles on May 52. Found breeding in pines at the Cove with large young flying June 26.

Cyanocephalus cyanocephalus. Pinyon Jay. Seen first high up among the lava terraces at the Bridge Creek beds in June. It was extremely shy and some hours were spent in trying to stalk it. It flew very high uttering a note which is exactly like that of the crow pitched higher. Specimens were shot at Cherry Creek Hill on the way back July 6; not at all shy.

Molothrus ater. Cowbird. Observed at Bridge Creek, June 3. A male was observed to go through the most grotesque antics in singing; the head was thrown forward to the limit of the neck and a very visible effort brought up a bubbling volley of notes not unlike those of *Scolecophagus*.

Sturnella neglecta. Western Meadowlark. Heard at The Dalles at sunrise May 22, singing a greeting from the sister state across the Columbia. Found at the Bridge Creek beds, not in the valley bottom as might be expected, but far up the sides among the lava terraces.

Icterus bullocki. Bullock Oriole. In full song at The Dalles May 22. Abundant on Bridge Creek. Noted feeding on cicadas at the Cove June 22.

Scolecophagus cyanocephalus. Brewer Blackbird. Cherry Creek Hill, May

30. Common in all kinds of country; seen in flocks even on the dry sage hills. Noted in the pine belt at Spanish Gulch on June 15. Not seen at the Cove.

Hesperiphona v. montana. Western Evening Grosbeak. Cherry Creek Hill, May 30. "The first bird note heard this morning was a peculiar metallic clink much like that of *Guiraca cerulea*. Investigation revealed a fine specimen of *Hesperiphona* in a low juniper near the tent. The bird was not at all shy allowing me to come directly under the tree as he hopped about uttering his peculiar note. A number of small flocks were observed later in the morning. The air was quite crisp and cold and the abundant growth of junipers gave the impression of mountain country proper." On June 6 at Bridge Creek, much to my surprise, a flock of these birds was found among the willows along the stream. They were easily approached, one shot securing two females and a male. Search through the junipers during the rest of our stay here failed to reveal their further occurrence. It was seen in the pine belt at Spanish Gulch on June 15.

Carpodacus m. frontalis. House Finch. Specimen taken at the Cove where it was common in the sage.

Carpodacus p. californicus. Purple Finch. Single specimen in full song taken at the Cove. Observed above the Lower Basin on June 30 in birch timber.

Spinus pinus. Siskin. Noted at Cherry Creek Hill on May 30.

— *Astragalinus t. salicamans*. Goldfinch. A specimen in full plumage taken in willows at Bridge Creek, June 2.

Poœcetes g. confinis. Western Vesper Sparrow. First noted at Thorn Hollow on May 27, singing at intervals during the night, though it was cold and windy. It was easily observed the next morning on the sage hills where it was abundant and easily approached. Observed at the Cove June 24.

Melospiza c. morphna. Rusty Song Sparrow. Common among the willows of Bridge Creek. Specimens taken June 3. Nos. 9, 27, and 30 of the collection.

Junco h. shufeldti ? First noted in pine belt at Spanish Gulch. Later taken from Douglas spruce at the Cove, June 22.

Spizella s. arizonæ. Western Chipping Sparrow. May 17, at Eight Mile Creek. At Spanish Gulch in the pine belt on June 15.

Spizella breweri. Brewer Sparrow. Quite common on Bridge Creek in sage feeding on caterpillars. It had a pleasing little song and was doubtless nesting though long search failed to prove it so. Noted at the Cove on June 23.

Zonotrichia l. gambeli ? Specimens noted at Calab, June 15.

Chondestes g. strigatus. Western Lark Sparrow. Observed at Eight Mile Creek on May 19 and at the Cove June 23.

Zamelodia melanocephala. Black-headed Grosbeak. Took a fine male from the willows on Bridge Creek, June 6. Noticed feeding on cicadas at the Cove, June 22.

Cyanospiza amœna. Lazuli Bunting. Seen first at Eight Mile Creek, May 17. A very abundant form in the sage at Bridge Creek. In full song everywhere and doubtless breeding in the tall sage.

Pipilo m. oregonus. Oregon Towhee. Specimen No. 26 is of this species taken in sage on Bridge Creek June 7. No. 48, at the Cove on June 27.

Oreospiza chlorura. Green-tailed Towhee. First seen at Spanish Gulch, June 15 in pine timber, within 200 feet of the snow. The following day it was heard singing on a hot hillside in typical sage country on Birch Creek.

Piranga ludoviciana. Western Tanager. Quite common at mouth of Bridge Creek on May 31. Later it was taken at the Bridge Creek beds where it was abundant among the junipers and in sage feeding on small caterpillars. It was occasional at the Cove also.

Hirundo erythrogastra. Barn Swallow. Bridge Creek, June 6.

Tachycineta t. lepida. Violet-green Swallow. Observed flying over Bridge Creek on June 6.

Stelgidopteryx serripennis. Rough-winged Swallow. Observed along the stream at Bridge Creek, June 7. Probably nesting in the soft banks.

Ampelis cedrorum. Cedar Bird. Noted among the birches at Lower Basin, June 30, in flocks of eight to ten and very shy.

Vireo g. swainsoni. Western Warbling Vireo. Two taken in full song in willows on Bridge Creek, June 10. A family of large young was noted in birches at Lower Basin, June 28.

Dendroica æstiva. Yellow Warbler. First seen among willows at Eight Mile Creek on May 25. Abundant on Birch Creek and at the Cove.

Dendroica nigrescens. Black-throated Gray Warbler. On June 2, it was found in some numbers among the junipers at foot of Bridge Creek beds. It was extremely shy and no specimen could be obtained.

Dendroica auduboni. Audubon Warbler. A single specimen was observed above the Lower Basin, June 27.

Geothlypis t. occidentalis. Western Yellow-throat. First noted on Eight Mile Creek on May 25. Abundant also on Bridge Creek in June.

Geothlypis tolmiei. Tolmie Warbler. A single specimen was taken in a birch tree at the Cove, June 25. Several were taken in willows at Lower Basin July, 1.

Icteria v. longicauda. Long-tailed Chat. Quite common in willows on Bridge Creek, June 2.

Wilsonia p. pileolata. Pileolated Warbler. A female was taken feeding in willows on Bridge Creek, June 10.

Setophaga ruticilla. American Redstart. A single male was taken in full song among the willows on river at Lower Basin, July 1. The plumage however was quite immature. The specimen is No. 53 of the collection.

Oroscoptes montanus. Sage Thrasher. First noted at Thorn Hollow on May 27. I consider this bird the finest of the songsters next to the mocking bird. The pureness of his notes equals those of the mocker but the range is not so great. He has the charm of originality however. A peculiar trick of the bird was observed at sunrise one morning on a flower-covered hilltop. One was seen to start upward flying in small, irregular circles until it disappeared directly overhead.

Salpinctes obsoletus. Rock Wren. High up among the lava terraces of Bridge Creek, I found this species among the junipers, not entirely confined to the rocks but frequently perched high on a dead juniper, singing a quite varied song involving several musical intervals, the character still *Salpinctes* however. June 4.

Troglodytes a. parkmani. Western House Wren. A single specimen was observed in the side canyon above the Lower Basin, June 30.

Catherpes m. conspersus. Canyon Wren. First seen, May 27, at Sherar's Bridge. On June 5 it was found among the lava terraces on Bridge Creek in full song and among the beds at the Cove on June 22.

Parus gambeli. Mountain Chickadee. June 15, seen and heard singing among the pines and Douglas spruce at Spanish Gulch. The song is a beautiful, clear whistle of two long notes—"A" and G," the G" tone held slightly the longer. On June 27, it was found not at all rare among the willows and cottonwoods along the river at Lower Basin.

Regulus calendula. Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Observed among leafless willows at Caleb on June 13.

Hylocichla ustulata. Russet-backed Thrush. The song of this bird was heard among the leafless willows at Caleb, June 13, at dusk which is the favorite hour for its concerts. An hour was spent in vain effort to stalk this wary fellow in order to make the identification absolute. The failure was most unfortunate as the song and call note were both slightly different from that of this species in Berkeley.

Merula m. propinqua. Western Robin. This was one of the first species noted May 24. In full song at The Dalles about the yards in town. May 25, Cherry Creek hill—"Robins have been common all along the road; they are probably nesting already." May 30, Bridge Creek—"A nest was observed in low bush by roadside; contained four large young. It was so near the road as to enable one to look into it easily from the saddle without turning from his course." These birds were quite plentiful in the sage of Bridge Creek, where they fed upon a small caterpillar found there. We observed them at all points on the road and in all sorts of country up to the pine belt at Spanish Gulch. At the Cove they were observed feeding on cicadas on dry hillsides.

Sialia m. occidentalis. Western Bluebird. This species was abundant in flocks with large young among the pines above the Lower Basin. June 27.

Sialia arctica. Mountain Bluebird. A single specimen was observed at Currant Creek hill on May 29, and one other at base of the fossil beds on Bridge Creek, June 3.

Berkeley, California.

Nesting Habits of the Caracara

ADOLPH E. SCHUTZE

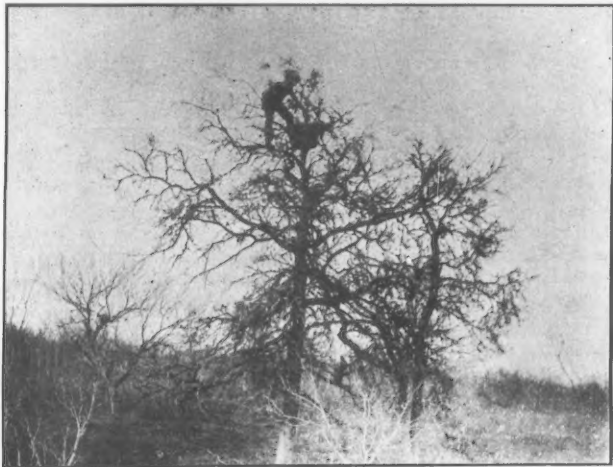
— THE caracara, (*Polyborus cheriway*) is an abundant bird throughout southeast Texas. Since it came under my observation, about five years ago, I have paid considerable attention to its nesting habits and food. It has been my good fortune in recent years annually to make extensive trips into the surrounding country, namely Travis, Bastrop and Caldwell counties, thus enabling me to become quite familiar with the general habits of the bird. This peculiar creature possesses both the characteristics of a hawk and vulture, but is more frequently seen in company with the latter. Its flight resembles that of neither hawk nor vulture, but is very straight and rapid and I am inclined to believe that it will often go many miles for its food. On a hot summer's day it can sometimes be seen circling high overhead after the manner of a hawk.

In central Texas it is also abundant, and is met with everywhere in open country, especially in chaparral and mesquite regions where food abounds and is easy to secure. The prairies which comprise vast areas of this great state are covered in most parts by a dwarf growth of mesquite, and distributed among these are elm, oak and hackberry trees of normal height, which afford good nesting places. I have found them breeding in heavy timbered creek bottoms, but on few occasions.

Its food consists of a vast amount of carrion, lizards, small snakes, various rodents and the cotton-tail rabbit. This rabbit is abundant throughout the chaparral regions of the state, and I can safely say that it forms about one-half the diet of this bird. Occasionally the remains of a rabbit is found in the bird's nest. I have often seen it in company with vultures while feeding on carrion, and on sever-

al occasions it has been seen feeding on the refuse that had been thrown out of the slaughter houses on the outskirts of the city. It does not seem to fear the presence of man and not infrequently are nests found in close vicinity of country dwellings.

Most of my observations were made in Caldwell county which consists principally of rolling prairie, intersected by numerous small streams, the banks of which are sparingly fringed with elm and hackberry trees. Here the birds may be found throughout the year. The birds are usually in pairs the year round, but sometimes during the winter months they can be seen in flocks of four and five. Nesting begins in February and early March, at which time both birds can be seen flying about together in search of a nesting site. Two and sometimes three broods are reared in a season, as nesting begins very early. The earliest recorded date that I have, is March 1, when I took a beautiful set of three eggs from a new nest in Caldwell county. The nest was composed entirely of broom-weeds without a lining and was constructed during the months of December, January and the first few days of February. The eggs were slightly incubated when found, and I am sure



COLLECTING EGGS OF THE CARACARA

I could have procured them a week earlier had I been aware of the fact. This would unquestionably have made the earliest nesting date for this section of the state. A nest of former years to which is added a few straws, is usually selected in which to rear their young and seldom is a new nest found. I think the greater number of the new nests are built by birds of the previous year, they being unable to procure old ones. Some, however, are built by birds that are molested too often and finally give up their old homes in despair. Some birds become so attached to their nests that they return each year, even after having been robbed time and again. New material is added yearly to the old nest, so that in course of time it becomes a huge and massive structure, and when conspicuously situated, which is generally the case, can be seen at a great distance.

One particular nest, that I now call to mind was found about six years ago in Caldwell county in a small elm on the crest of a high hill. When first found the nest was fully three feet in height and two and one-half feet in breadth. For some

unknown cause it was deserted and being exposed to the wind and weather soon decreased in size until now it is a mere platform of sticks, but still a relic of former days. Probably some day it will be repaired and made use of.

The nest is usually placed in the upright branches of an elm or oak, eight to fifty feet above the ground. Of the thirty-five nests that I have so far found, two-thirds are yearly reoccupied, but whether by the same pair of birds, I am unable to say. The birds are always careful in selecting a position where they are enabled to view the entire surrounding country with ease. When an intruder approaches, the parent immediately leaves without the slightest noise and is lost to view for a time. After a short while it returns with its mate and both alight on some nearby tree and watch the proceedings with much interest. Sometimes they will even alight on the same tree that contains the nest, while the intruder is examining the same. Again I have seen both birds flying about overhead, constantly uttering a loud guttural sound. Of the thirty-five nests that have come under my observation, thirty were composed solely of broomweed and without a lining, two were built of broomweeds and small briars, while the remaining three were built of various substances, such as corn husks, small sticks, broomweed, mesquite twigs and the like. Sometimes old nests of hawks are appropriated, and to these are added a few broomstraws, or weeds. Two and three eggs are laid, two being the usual complement. Surely few hawk, eagle, or vulture eggs present a greater diversity in coloration. The usual color is a light brown, which is marbled and clouded with various shades of darker brown. Some eggs are solid brown, some have a light chocolate ground, spotted and clouded with various shades of darker brown, and again I have seen eggs of a rich reddish brown. If washed in water when fresh they will readily lose color, and become a dirty white. On one occasion I found a nest containing two eggs of this species which were almost white. They had been exposed to much rain for the entire coloring was washed off. Incubation was well advanced and on this account I was unable to preserve them. Three eggs in my cabinet collected March 1, 1902, have a light brown ground color spotted, streaked and clouded with a darker shade of brown. They measure respectively 2.19 by 1.74; 2.23 by 1.82; 2.12 by 1.82 inches. The picture accompanying this article was taken by the writer in April 1902 in Caldwell county. The nest contained one fresh egg, which was left undisturbed and after two days a full set was secured.

These birds do not thrive in captivity. I saw two in San Pedro Park, in San Antonio, last summer. They were in a very small cage and though full grown were much smaller than the birds which are at liberty. They were very active, and watched with much interest the people that were passing by.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Two Unusual Birds at Stanford University, Cal.—At the May meeting of the Cooper Club, Prof. John O. Snyder of Stanford University, exhibited a specimen and nest and eggs of the Sierra junco (*Junco h. thurberi*) which he had secured in the Stanford Arboretum. The nest was built between the loose bark and the trunk of an eucalyptus, several feet from the ground, a quite unusual position for a junco. One would naturally expect to find the Point Pinos junco, if any; but this specimen, compared with the type of the latter species turns out to be the inland bird. The other junco of the pair, or perhaps there is a little colony, was seen by the writer all through the spring, and as late as July 11, when it was observed perched head downward, drinking from a hydrant.

In the last issue of this magazine a little note was inserted stating that an olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus borealis*) had taken up residence in the Stanford Arboretum. This bird, or

some other individual, was last seen June 26, perched on the topmost branch of a tall eucalyptus, where its loud call rang forth as in the coniferous forests of its usual summer home, the Transition and Canadian zones.—WALTER K. FISHER.



A WATER OUSEL'S NEST

A Water Ouzel's Nest.—

The accompanying photograph of a water ouzel's nest (*Cinclus mexicanus*) was secured on the San Lorenzo, in Santa Cruz County, California. The nest was beautifully situated on the down-stream side of a big rock in the middle of rapids, where the water was boiling all around it. Although taken in 1897, the nest was so round and compactly built that it is in perfect shape to-day, and the moss has a green, fresh look. The inside of the nest is lined with twigs, strips of redwood bark, and bay leaves.—GEORGE S. TOWNE, Palo Alto, Cal.

Bell Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*) in Santa Clara Co., California.—On March 31, 1904, I took two specimens of Bell sparrow near the San Antonio Creek (locally known as Adobe Creek) in the foothills of Black Mountain (Monte Bello)

Santa Clara Co., California. At least two others of the same species were seen, and since the specimens secured proved to be male and female adults, with sex organs well developed and enlarged, it is very probable that the species breeds here.—HUBERT O. JENKINS, *Stanford Univ., Cal.*

Nesting Habits of the Rock Wren.—Noting Mrs. Bailey's most interesting article on the rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) permit me herewith to quote a few lines on this interesting wren from my note book.

During the years of 1898 and 1899, while sojourning in San Antonio, Texas, it was my good fortune to run across a colony of eight or ten pairs of rock wrens. Near the head of the San Antonio River in the northern suburbs of the city where the land is broken, of a limestone formation with almost no surface soil and covered with prickly pear and laurel, is quite an extensive lime-stone quarry. This, with its immediate environs, is the home of the colony of rock wrens, and was where I located and examined thirteen nests as follows: *Nest 1*, April 2, 1898; building in crevice in wall of quarry 20 feet up, the male assisting in its construction. This nest now before me, and which is typical of this colony, is composed outwardly of weed stalks and dead grasses with a heavy layer of fine rootlets, the inner nest being fairly well cupped and heavily lined with grayish goat hair. Inside diameter of this nest is $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches with a depth of $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches, the whole being placed in and upon a cup-shaped foundation or rim composed of numerous and various sized flat stones deposited by the birds, the interstices and uneven places on bottom of crevice being filled with these stones, forming a walk to the nest which was placed 8 inches in from face of wall. There must have been at least a half pint of these lime-stone chips, and it seems incredible how so small a bird with so slender a bill can carry stones of such a size and weight to such a height. Measurements of three of the larger stones before me are as follows: $2\frac{1}{2}$ by $\frac{3}{4}$ by $\frac{1}{4}$; $1\frac{1}{2}$ by 1 by $\frac{3}{4}$; $1\frac{3}{4}$ by $\frac{3}{4}$ by 3 -16. In weight they each run something over one-fourth of an ounce. On April 15th this nest contained 6 eggs.

Nest 2, April 2, building. This nest was placed in a small cavity in a pile of loose refuse rock and debris 3 feet up, the material being practically identical with that of No. 1. This nest rested in a cup-shaped foundation of flat stones. No signs of a walk existed, possibly owing to lack of space. On April 26th nest contained 6 newly hatched young. During incubation the male was quite wary but very attentive to his mate, taking her all the most choice morsels in the way of small beetles. On April 7th I was rewarded by locating three nests. *Nest 3* con-

tained 5 young about 5 days old, material and location practically the same as No. 1; nest foundation of stones and walk of stones extending about 10 inches. *Nest 4* contained 5 young 10 or 12 days old; nest placed in small cavity formed by root of tree 10 feet up in wall of quarry. Nest was typical, placed in shallow cup-shaped foundation of stones; no room in cavity for walk. *Nest 5* contained 6 young 10 or 12 days old. Nest was placed in cavity under boulders on bottom of quarry and had the usual stone foundation; two matches, a few splinters of wood, lining of black goat hair and considerable wool, especially round the rim; no sign of a walk. *Nest 6* contained 3 eggs; typical; location practically same as No. 5; cup-shaped foundation of rocks; no sign of a walk. *Nest 7*, April 8, 1899, containing 6 young, one week old; nest situated in crevice in wall of quarry; typical stone foundation and 9 inches of walk. *Nest 8*, April 11, containing 5 young a few days old. Nest typical, placed in cavity in wall of stone powder magazine; usual stone foundation; slight walk of stones. *Nest 9*, April 15, containing 5 fresh eggs; nest typical; location, foundation and walk same as No. 1. *Nest 10*, April 29; in a cavity formed by large rocks on bottom of quarry; nest typical, usual cup-shaped stone foundation, no sign of walk; 6 eggs. *Nest 11*, May 18, containing 7 eggs; nest, location and foundation same as No. 10; no sign of stone walk. *Nest 12*, June 3, containing 7 eggs; nest typical, placed in crevice in wall of quarry 10 feet up; usual foundation of stones, also 7 inch walk; evidently second nest of pair of birds, whose nest was located on April 8th. *Nest 13*, June 3, containing 7 eggs. This nest was typical, but the location was quite unusual, the structure being placed in a small waste or outlet pipe in an old open cistern. This pipe was 4 inches in diameter and about 3 feet from top of cistern. This nest had quite an extensive walk and stone foundation consisting of at least a pint of stones.

Summing up the above it will be seen that where the nests were located at the bottom of the quarry there was no attempt at building a walk, but when the nest was situated in a crevice the walk was invariably there provided. Of course there was room for it. In every case, however, the cup or saucer-shaped foundation was there. Query: could not this walk have been built to keep the young birds from falling into the crevices or getting their feet caught in same? I find that as a rule two broods are raised in a season and that their food consists to a large extent of a species of beetle which they find in the crevices of the rocks.

One interesting trait and one which I should judge to be purely local is their habit of dodging under a boulder or overhanging rock upon the loud report of a blast, and remaining there until the shower of falling rock is over. They are then among the first upon the ground, searching fearlessly among the Mexican quarrymen for such beetles as may have become exposed by the blast. They seem perfectly fearless of the quarrymen and the heavy cannonading, but on the appearance of a stranger they become quite perturbed and suspicious and very cautious in going to their nests. It was some days or even weeks before they permitted any familiarity whatever on my part. How they stand the terrific heat and glare in that quarry during July and August is a mystery to me.—PHILO W. SMITH, JR., *St. Louis, Mo.*

Melanism in *Buteo borealis calurus*.—While overhauling a number of *Buteo* skins a few months ago there was one which did not answer the tag *B. swainsoni*. On comparing it with some dark phases of *Buteo borealis calurus* of the last month's collecting I found this particular skin to be a beautiful melanistic phase of *calurus*. It is a female, number 1446, coll. W. O. B., Haywards, Cal., August 20, 1897. The general color of the plumage is a blackish brown over the whole body, with a purplish reflection on the back and wings; the edges of the feathers of the breast, belly and thighs washed with chestnut brown; thighs also sparsely mottled with the same color. The measurements are: length 22 inches, wing 17 inches; while another female taken December 18, 1903, measures $23\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length, wing $18\frac{3}{4}$ inches. This specimen compares more with some dark phases of *B. swainsoni*. The rufous tail is black-banded, twice as deep as in a typical red-tail, and is edged with same at end. The head and throat are rufous black, fore-breast more grayish, belly brownish black, thighs rufous, barred with black, wings dusky brown and black, edged and slightly barred with grayish white; upper and under tail-coverts similar to thighs. A slight purplish reflection is seen over the wings, but not so much as on the first bird described.

In a large series of these hawks there are rarely two out of five but show a difference in the plumage color. Seven out of twelve before me run either to a light or dark phase; some with grayish backs, others with dark brownish black or chestnut. The throat, breast and belly run from ochraceous gray to reddish brown, chestnut and yellowish white.—W. OTTO EMERSON, *Haywards, Cal.*

A Few Notes on Bird Life at Three Rivers, Tulare Co., Cal.—The varied thrushes have been here in numbers, and the plain titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) is giving out its pleasant call: *wheetit, wheetit, wheetit*. Band-tailed pigeons (*Columba fasciata*) have been and

are plentiful here. They have taken their winter food from the live oak of the foothills (*Quercus wislizeni*); now they feed largely from manzanita buds. On February 10, I heard a noise which sounded like *coo, coo, coo*, and after a search I found a road-runner perched up in the branches of an oak tree. I recognized it as the author of the sounds I had heard. I suppose this is one of its love songs.

One of my young friends informed me that he saw a bird sitting in a nest at the eave of his house on the 23d of December, 1901. January 13 he looked in the nest and found four eggs nearly ready to hatch. Two weeks later they were hatched and gone. He informs me also that this same nest contained three broods of five birds each last summer. I think the bird is the Say phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). A friend of mine saved a nest of a hummingbird, probably *Calypte anna*, which had been built upon a small loop of rope, which was attached to one of the rafters of a shed. The nest was made of spiders' webs, and two young were hatched August 2, 1901, but they died. My friend at the same ranch reported finding a complete set of dove's eggs (*Zenaidura macroura*) February 27, 1902.—W. F. DEAN, *Three Rivers, Cal.*

NOTES AND NEWS

We have just received a letter from Mr. Grinnell dated Mt. Pinos, June 26. He says: "Here I am, on the slopes of Mt. Pinos, a state of existence which I have longed for, for many moons. And I am not disappointed either, in the wildness of it, nor in the animals so far secured, though there is a lamentable lack of water. We have been just ten days from Pasadena, loitering in Antelope Valley and Tejon Pass en route. To-day I climbed to the top of the peak and had a fine view of the country all about, Tulare Lake, Sierra Nevada, Mojave Desert and the ocean. We are camped at 6500 feet." We shall leave the "animals" for Mr. Grinnell to detail later, as they are an interesting lot.

Mr. Edmund Heller writes from Juchitan, Oaxaca, Mexico, under date of April 23d: "Since writing you before, our instructions have been modified and we are now collecting both mammals and birds for the department of taxidermy. For the last month we have been at work on the dry side of the isthmus, in a country resembling in fauna and flora the deserts of California and Arizona." Mr. Heller is making natural history collections for the Field-Columbian Museum.

Mr. J. O. Snyder has left for an extensive fishing trip through the Klamath and Goose Lake Basins of southern Oregon.

The last of May we received a notice of the Spring Outing Meeting of the Southern Division, but have since heard nothing of the meeting itself. By the way, is the Secretary of the Southern Division on a protracted vacation? We have not received official minutes since March 1903.

We have heard unofficially that an Audubon Society has been organized in Pasadena, but have received no word from headquarters. Mr. Scott Way is secretary.

Mr. Hubert O. Jenkins has left for Mt. Whitney, to be gone the rest of the summer.

About the middle of the summer Mr. Malcolm P. Anderson expects to sail for China, where he will be engaged, for the next three years, in collecting mammals for the British Museum.

Mr. R. B. Moran is camping in Santa Barbara county.

Mr. W. W. Price is located at his summer camp, Glen Alpine, Tallac, California.

Mr. P. M. Silloway is in the vicinity of Bigfork, Montana, for the summer.

The Thirteenth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds, issued with the July *Auk* contains among others the following important changes and additions. *Dendragapus obscurus sierræ* Chapman is added; *Nyctala Brehm* becomes *Cryptoglaux* Richmond; *Sayornis nigricans semiatra* dropped; *Corvus americanus* becomes *C. brachyrhynchus*; *Scolecophagus Swainson*, preoccupied, becomes *Euphagus* Cassin; *Astragalinus psaltria hesperophilus* Oberholser is added (S. W. U. S.); *Pipilo fuscus carolæ* is dropped; *Lanius ludovicianus mearnsi* Ridgway (San Clemente Id.) is added; *Budytes flavus alascensis* Ridgway is added; *Heleodytes brunneicapillus* is replaced by *H. b. couesi*; *Baeolophus inornatus restrictus* Ridgway (vicinity of San Francisco Bay) is added; *Phylloscaptes Meyer* becomes *Acanthopneuste* Blasius; *Dendroica aestiva brewsteri*, and *Heleodytes brunneicapillus anthonyi* are rejected. *Passerulus rostratus halophilus* is equivalent to *P. r. guttatus* in summer plumage. The Ptiliognathinae, Miminae, Sittinae and Chamæinae are raised to family rank.

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Minutes of Club Meetings

NORTHERN DIVISION

MARCH.—The club met March 5, at the residence of Miss Sophie Englehardt, Oakland, one honorary member, Mr. W. E. Bryant, nineteen active members, and twelve visitors being present. The President, Mr. H. R. Taylor, was in the chair. The following were elected to active membership: P. B. Peabody, J. L. Childs, Vernon Bailey, G. W. Luce, and Miss Anna M. Wiebalk. There were ten applications for membership: C. W. Richmond, Washington, D. C., Ruthven Deane, Chicago, Ill., O. Widmann, St. Louis, Mo., William Brewster, Cambridge, Mass., and L. B. Bishop, New Haven, Conn., being proposed by Dr. A. K. Fisher; A. H. Keeney, Santa Barbara, and Jonathan Dwight, New York, by Mr. Grinnell; E. S. Cheney, Oakland, Cal., by Mr. Emerson; J. H. Flanagan, Providence, R. I., and Lieut. W. B. Eastman, San Francisco, by Chas. S. Thompson. A communication was read, in which Mr. Grinnell stated that the Club was in good condition financially, and on motion Mr. Grinnell was instructed to prepare a general statement of the financial affairs of the Club. Mr. W. Lee Chambers was appointed, to inspect the Club books.

The business having been disposed of, the program was next taken up, Chas. S. Thompson reading a paper on "A Visit to a Yellow-billed Magpie Colony," which was discussed by the members, R. B. Moran and Mr. Kaeding making remarks. Mr. F. E. Newberry read an interesting paper on "The Osprey in Rhode Island," relating his experiences with the birds during several years. He showed a fine series of photographs of osprey's nests, as well as several sets of eggs which were much admired.

The meeting then adjourned to meet at the residence of Professor O. P. Jenkins, at Stanford University, May 7, 1904.

CHAS. S. THOMPSON, Secretary.

MAY.—The Club met May 7, at the residence of Prof. O. P. Jenkins, at Stanford University, sixteen active members and ten visitors being present. President H. R. Taylor was in the chair. Ten active members were elected as follows: Jonathan Dwight, Jr., A. H. Keeney, L. B. Bishop, William Brewster, O. Widmann, Ruthven Deane, C. W. Richmond, Lieut. W. B. Eastman, J. H. Flanagan, and E. S. Cheney. There were three applications for membership. L. Stejneger, Washington, D. C., and S. F. Rathbun, Seattle, being proposed by Dr. A. K. Fisher, and Walter Deane, Cambridge, Mass., by Joseph Grinnell.

The program was now taken up, Mr. N. Carpenter reading an interesting paper entitled "Bird Life on the San Luis Rey." Mr. Snyder next spoke on "The Nesting of the Sierra Junco at Stanford University." He exhibited a nest and three eggs of Sierra junco taken at Stanford University, and the skin of the female parent. Mr. Snyder's talk was discussed at some length inasmuch as the Sierra junco has been found "breeding out of its range, at an unusual time and in an unusual place." Mr. Thompson read an article from the "Pennsylvania Register" for 1831 (cf. p. 345) in which the nesting habits of the cliff swallow were described. This paper was also discussed, Mr. Taylor pointing out that it was probably the first published observation on the cliff swallow's nesting on barns, showing that they must have changed their nesting places in that particular locality at about this time. The meeting then adjourned to meet at the residence of H. R. Taylor, Alameda, Cal., July 9, 1904.

CHAS. S. THOMPSON, Secretary.

* The publication of a Catalogue, or manual, giving exchange valuations of nests and eggs, while not strictly speaking, a contribution to scientific knowledge, perhaps is not without its interest and value, particularly if the scale of relative valuations be worked out with careful consideration of the abundance or rarity of a given species, the question of a restricted range, demand, supply, European importations, recent explorations, or the contrary, and the numerous circumstances which must, as far as is possible, be reviewed in arriving at a judgment somewhere nearly correct. In this country where private collections are almost a necessity in many instances for advanced students, a "Catalogue" such as the one in contemplation, while it may always fall short necessarily of perfection, is almost indispensable as a guide in the exchange of specimens; while, in general, the prices indicated in the compendium may be said often to give concretely and concisely a fair idea of the relative abundance of species—at least of such as are readily obtainable. Taylor's Standard American Egg Catalogue is to be issued early in August, with the A. O. U. list to date and prices thoroughly revised with the assistance of prominent Oologists. The active cooperation in this task, which is in no sense a financial enterprise, of all interested, is asked and will be appreciated by

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Alameda, Cal., July 5, 1904.





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